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The problem of education for socially disadvantaged children is summarized. The growing interest in the problem and the factors that have influenced this increased interest are explained. The term "socially disadvantaged child," is defined, and sub-collegiate and collegiate programs being used in compensatory education are listed. Finally, an extensive bibliography of literature on the socially disadvantaged child is listed.

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THE EDUCATION OF SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN AND YOUTH: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

This statement undertakes to provide a brief introduction to the education of socially disadvantaged young people, and to list a few references to varied problems and practices involved. The statement is prepared in response to the many requests received by the Information Retrieval Center on the Disadvantaged for general information about developments in the field.

A Growing Movement

The education of socially disadvantaged children and youth has emerged during the past few years as a major concern of the profession -- and, indeed, of the nation. Hundreds of public school systems and institutions of higher education are developing special educational programs and practices to "compensate" for the observed educational handicaps of disadvantaged youth. Many religious, civic and other agencies are conducting volunteer programs to supplement those of the public schools. A body of literature is beginning to emerge -- a few books, hundreds of articles, and thousands of published and unpublished reports and other documents. Educational and governmental leaders issue frequent pronouncements on the urgent need to provide special educational services for disadvantaged young people; professional conferences are being held on the problems and issues involved; and implementing legislation is being processed on both the state and federal levels.

The emergence during the 1960's of this widespread concern for the education of disadvantaged children and youth is due to a number of influences, only a few of which can here be given brief mention.

Probably most basic is the growth of a large population of unemployed, out-of-school youth with few or no prospects of substantial gainful employment, giving rise to what Conant called "social dynamite" in our cities. Mounting anxiety over "the drop-out problem," for example, does not reflect a decrease in the holding power of the schools, which continues to improve. Rather, it reflects growing awareness of the threat to humanistic and social values which inheres in the decreased life-chances of young people with but little education in a labor market from which unskilled jobs are rapidly being eliminated through automation.

Another important influence is the rise of the civil rights movement, especially since the landmark decision of the Supreme Court in 1954, and the related decision of the U.S. District Court in the New Rochelle (N.Y.) Case in 1961. This movement's pressing demand for "quality, integrated education" for minority-group children, who are often relegated to inferior segregated schools, has operated as a catalyst for improvement in public education, generally.

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Another influence is growing recognition by the profession that still prevailing notions about "in-born" and "fixed" intelligence are unsound, and lead to harmful practices in the schools. As the theoretical work of Hunt and many related studies suggest, intellectual function is greatly influenced by the quality of the individual's encounters with his environment, especially during the period of early childhood; and to alter the nature and variety of those encounters is to alter the course and extent of one's intellectual development. Educators now know that the learning potential of the socially disadvantaged is far greater than has been commonly assumed.

Mention should also be made of the stimulating influence of philanthropy. The Ford Foundation's support of The Great Cities School Improvement Program, for example, has been a major factor in furthering the development of compensatory educational programs throughout the country.

Although these and related influences have led to a great deal of discussion about and planning for the education of socially disadvantaged children and youth, together with many innovations in school and college practices, the "movement" is still in its infancy. The special programs now under way affect only a small fraction of the millions of young people in need of compensatory educational services, and the tested knowledge essential to assure the development of programs which are theoretically sound is just beginning to accumulate.

The Concept: "Socially Disadvantaged Child"

The term "culturally deprived child," which was prevalent in the field several years ago, is coming to be supplanted by "socially disadvantaged child" and related variants. (Some writers advocate "culturally different child.") Several considerations help to delineate this concept.

In the first place, "culture" -- as social scientists use the term -- is a universal attribute of all social groupings; and variations among cultures cannot properly be interpreted as differences in "amount" or in "worth," but only as differences in kind. No child is "deprived" of a culture.

Second, although all groups in our society share to some extent in the prevailing "middle-class culture," there are nevertheless many different patterns of culture, reflecting more or less distinct ways of life among particular nationality, religious, ethnic, social-class, geographical and other groups within the population. They may be characterized as "sub-cultures."

Third, these sub-cultures vary in the extent to which their socializing influences (i.e., intra-family relationships, child-rearing practices, language patterns, intellectual pursuits, behavioral norms, values, outlooks, etc.) equip children to adapt successfully to the middle-class cultural patterns which prevail in the larger society. Thus, children who are socialized in sub-cultures markedly different from the prevailing culture often find themselves "disadvantaged" in social settings -- first of all, the schools -- where middle-class values and behavioral patterns are commonly required for success.

Finally, the common denominator of those sub-cultures whose socializing influences are largely alien to the demands of middle-class norms is poverty. The populations involved live mainly in urban and rural slums. Most of them are white. A substantial proportion of them are minority groups -- especially Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, and American Indians, and in lesser degree Asians -- the burden of whose poverty is aggravated by racial or ethnic discrimination.

It is mainly the children socialized in these sub-cultures of poverty and discrimination who are characterized as "socially disadvantaged." Their educational and other handicaps stem for the most part from incongruities between their sub-cultures and that which prevails in the schools and in the society generally. Their disadvantages are social in origin, resulting mainly from chronic impoverishment in a society which affords scant economic opportunity for millions of its people, and which further victimizes many of them on grounds of race.

Although large numbers of such children find it difficult to cope with conventional school tasks, this is by no means universally the case. Many of them -- for reasons which available research does not fully clarify -- perform quite successfully in school, even without special "compensatory" services. Thus, the useful concept "socially disadvantaged child" should not be employed as a stereotype for all children nurtured in sub-cultures of poverty and discrimination. Such children are characterized by a wide range of individual differences -- in academic motivation, in learning ability, and in general patterns of behavior.

Compensatory Programs and Practices

"Compensatory educational programs," as here used, refers to special school-based, organized, guided-learning experiences which are expressly designed to help overcome the educational handicaps commonly observed among children and youth who grow up in sub-cultures of poverty. The definition is, of course, somewhat arbitrary. Theoretically sound and efficiently implemented school programs which are not "expressly" so designed may serve much the same purpose quite well. Moreover, many important "compensatory" educational programs are not based on the schools.

The compensatory educational programs here under discussion are being developed on the elementary and secondary school levels and in institutions of higher education. A nation-wide survey of such programs was recently conducted at the Yeshiva University Graduate School of Education, and reports of the findings will be published during the current year.

Sub-collegiate

The main types of compensatory programs and practices thus far identified on the elementary and secondary school levels include:

1. Pre-kindergarten or nursery school programs
2. After-school tutoring programs
3. Summer programs, both remedial and college-preparatory
4. Work-study and vocational training programs, including re-training
5. Dropout-prevention and reclamation programs
6. Special schools or centers (e.g., for preliminary orientation of migrant children)

7. Special programs of instruction in reading, including some for bi-lingual children
8. Other special instructional programs
9. Field-trip "enrichment" programs
10. Team teaching
11. Programmed instruction
12. Special classroom grouping practices, including the ungraded unit
13. Inspiring adult models in the classroom, especially lower-class and minority-group persons from the local community
14. Special readers and textbooks, adapted to academic achievement levels and interests presumed to prevail among lower-class children
15. Textbooks and other instructional materials which interpret the life and history of minority-group peoples
16. A wide range of other innovations in curriculum content and instructional methods
1 ..Supplemental instructional and guidance personnel and services, including reduced class-size and counselor-loads in some cases
18. Other special personnel and services (e.g., health, psychological, social-work, etc.)
19. Special workshops, institutes and courses for the in-service education of teachers in depressed-area schools
20. Special programs of intergroup education
21. Special programs to involve lower-class parents and communities in the work of the school

More than 100 public school systems are known to be developing programs along these lines. Some large urban systems have comprehensive programs which include many or most of the compensatory practices listed above, and are developing them in substantial numbers of schools. Other systems have more limited programs, often including only a few of these practices and a small number of schools. Several states, notably New York and California, are developing state-wide programs of compensatory education, supported and guided by state school officials in cooperation with local school authorities.

Collegiate

The main types of compensatory programs and practices thus far identified on the collegiate level include:

1. Special recruiting procedures directed toward enrolling more socially disadvantaged students
2. Modified admissions requirements
3. Special programs of financial aid
4. Pre-college preparatory courses (e.g., during summer)
5. Special counseling and guidance services
6. Special tutoring in college
7. Special remedial courses in college, with or without academic credit
8. Special instruction in study skills, test-taking, etc.
9. Special curriculum, or sequence of courses
10. Lengthened time for completing the baccalaureate degree (e.g., five years)
11. Special post-graduate and follow-up programs

More than 200 colleges and universities are known to be using one or more of the compensatory practices listed above. They vary widely in the scope of their programs along this line.

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